THE

RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. IV. March 11, 1938 Adar II, 8, 5698 No. 2.

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By Samuel Dinin

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EDITORIALS

Broken Reeds

THE United Palestine Appeal for 1938 has been organized, and American Jewry, during the next three months, will be called upon once more to demonstrate its generosity toward the national funds, Keren Hayesod and Keren Kayemet. That the task of evoking large contributions from masses of Jews will prove exceptionally difficult this year cannot be denied. The so-called recession in business, combined with the uncertain situation in Palestine will test the campaigning skill of the most energetic leaders.

We believe, therefore, that it is necessary at a time like this to reaffirm some fundamentals of Jewish reconstruction. We feel that American Jews must bear in mind the bare fact that Zion will not be rebuilt nor rendered secure through the efforts of any group or nation except the Jewish people itself. The essence of Zionist ideology lies in the awareness by Jews that the only emancipation possible for them is auto-emancipation. No section of the world's population can or should be depended upon to solve our problem for us; our salvation lies in our hands.

This is as true today as it was in the days of the Prophets. Palestine at that time was being crushed between Egypt and Assyria. Diplomats differed as to whether to allign Palestine with the one or the other; the Prophets regarded dependence upon either as a betrayal of faith in God. With their statesmanlike perspicacity, they perceived that neither nation really wished them well; neither was concerned with the welfare of the Jews; both were "broken reeds."

In our day, Palestine is once again the desire of two empires. The British and the Italians play their game of diplomacy, with the control of the Mediterranean as the stake—and Palestine, with its strategic position close to the Suez Canal, as one of the chief prizes. After our dependence for more than twenty years on Great Britain, we realize more and more that our salvation dare not be placed in her hands. The exigencies of the international situation drive Great Britain to make overtures of friendship with her rivals, and she is prepared to sacrifice anyone who stands in her way.

Observe with what infuriating leisureliness Great Britain proceeds to solve the problem in Palestine. A Royal Commission spends months gathering data, and months in preparing a lengthy report. The report is debated; in the meanwhile, immigration of Jews is virtually at a standstill, economic growth is stunted, Arab terrorism hammers away at Jewish morale in Palestine and in the diaspora. Still no action is taken. At long last, a dispatch from London on February 28th

tells us that "After nearly two months of inaction, the British Government has finally selected three of the four members of the 'technical commission' that is to study the partition question." Once more, a commission will go through the laborious process of gathering the facts; once more witnesses will be called; once more a report will be prepared. While the Jews of Europe live in anguished anxiety, Mr. Ormsby-Gore "gave no sign of attempting to hasten its (the new commission's) decision when asked in the Commons how long its investigations would last."

Shall the Jews of this country sit back and wait for this agonizing performance to end before doing anything? On the contrary, now is the time to consolidate our position in Palestine: to purchase more land, to strengthen the hands of the *yishub*, hasten land settlement and bolster morale. Now is the time for Jews to spend large sums for propaganda and education among the Arabs. If we are not for ourselves, who will be for us? We dare not permit our comparatively insignificant financial retrogression to affect this year's campaign; if anything, we should redouble our efforts, for whatever decisions Great Britain may arrive at concerning us, the rebuilding of our homeland is our job and its ultimate success or failure rests with us.

Harry L. Glucksman

IN the untimely death of Harry L. Glucksman the American Jewish community has suffered a great, perhaps an irreparable loss.

There has been taken from Jewish life one of its loveliest personalities—a man of kindliness, compassion, tolerance and intelligence. The breadth, intensity and diversity of his friendships were truly remarkable, embracing in their scope hundreds of social workers, men of letters and science and representatives of almost every shade of Jewish opinion and social grouping. Without compromise of his own viewpoint, he was a personal friend to Zionist and non-Zionist, religious and irreligious, to assimilationist and survivalist alike.

For his profession he was abundantly equipped. His understanding of the problems that face social work, his grasp of its techniques and skills made him one of the most distinguished figures in his chosen field of activity. With his endowments, native and acquired, went a capacity for enthusiasm, an ability to work tirelessly, and a negation of self for ideal ends. His contributions to the Jewish Community Center movement, which was his particular enterprise, were many and significant. But in his interests and activities he reached so widely beyond the confines of his special task that there is scarcely an area of positive Jewish interest which did not enlist his cooperation and feel the stimulating impact of his abilities.

What makes his passing so great a loss is the fact that he was not only a vivid personality and a gifted social worker but also an enthusiastic Jew. For unfortunately the Jewish attitudes of a considerable proportion of those who give their professional services to Jewish institutions is lacking in enthusiasm for Judaism. There are among Jewish social workers some who are totally indifferent to the deeper values of Judaism. Their task, as they see it, is purely a technical one. They do not regard it as their function to be concerned with ends and ultimates. The building of an adequate Jewish life is beyond their purview. Like glorified clerks they are unconcerned with the health of the organism to which they minister. Strange, fantastic as it may seem, there are among Jewish social workers even assimilationists, hostile to the evolution of a richer, more meaningful religious and cultural life.

This is not the occasion to criticize, either on ideal or practical grounds, the attitudes of Jewish indifferentists and assimilationists in Jewish social work. But, this tribute to Harry Glucksman would not be complete if it were not clearly in-

dicated that he was more than a time-serving technician, that he was articulate and enthusiastic in his Jewish affirmations.

His were a fine understanding of the Jewish past and a sympathy for its essential values. His was an acute awareness of present problems, ideological, cultural and religious. He was motivated beyond all else by a recognition of the necessity, pragmatic and ideal, of reconstructing Jewish life to the end that Judaism might function more effectively among Jews. In this devotion is to be found the dynamism of his creativity.

American Jewry has been deprived by his death of a vivid personality, a technician of outstanding abilities and a force for Jewish reconstruction. And yet the bereavement is not absolute. He has joined that innumerable company of teachers, sages and communal workers through whose efforts Judaism was created in the past, through whose devotion it will live in the future, a source of blessing to Israel and through Israel to the world.

Should Communists Be Barred From Public Office?

THE clamor on the part of certain elements of the New York electorate for the removal from office of Simon W. Gerson, appointed by Stanley M. Isaacs, Borough President of Manhattan to act as his assistant, raises an issue of more than local importance. The basis of the demand is Mr. Gerson's membership in the Communist Party. Although there are states in which membership in the Communist Party is itself illegal, New York is not one of them. There are some who claim that there would be no objection to a Communist if he were elected to office. That would be thwarting the will of the people in a democratic society. They only object to a Communist's being appointed to public office by an official who was himself elected on a non-Communist ticket. There are others, however, who maintain that whether elected or appointed, a Communist should not be permitted to take office. Since legally they have no case, the Communist Party being a legal party, they resort to such technical reasons as that a Communist cannot be believed to take seriously an oath to support the Constitution of the United States.

Assuming that technical grounds of one kind or another can be found for removing Mr. Gerson from his position, should such action be favored and supported? Briefly stated, the case for removal is this:

Mr. Gerson, although his personal and professional qualifications for the duties of his office are not challenged, is a member of the Communist Party. The Communist Party is avowedly revolutionary and, although its adherents in America claim that they oppose violence unless it is forced upon them by illegal violent action on the part of Fascist and quasi-Fascist elements, the public, by and large, puts little faith in these protestations. For there have been times when Communists in America, as elsewhere, have publicly scoffed at the political institutions of capitalist democracy. They have also had recourse to the maxim that the end justifies the means, as in their defense of the seemingly arbitrary acts on the part of the Communist dictatorship in Russia. Communists, therefore, have only themselves to blame if they are under suspicion of insincerity in their present support of bourgeois democracy. The fact also that the Communist Party in the U. S. A. is affiliated with the Russia-dominated Comintern, casts upon it the approbrium with which the American public views the inquisitional terror of the present regime in Russia. For all these reasons, certain elements seek the removal of Gerson from his appointive office.

Notwithstanding all the above considerations, we nevertheless view with disfavor the attempt to remove Mr. Gerson from office. Democracy is threatened and may be traduced if membership in a le-

gally recognized political party is held to be a disqualification for holding office. To permit this view to gain headway is to open a wedge for the suppression of other minority groups. Today it is the Communist Party that many would outlaw; to-morrow it may be the Socialist Party, and the day after, the C.I.O. Whatever danger to the democratic state there may seem to be in permitting Mr. Gerson to continue in office cannot be compared with the danger that stems from a violent anti-Communist drive which, more often than not, serves as a rallying cry and smokescreen for concerted action on the part of all the reactionaries and Fascists in the community, even though frequently aided and abetted by sincere but confused liberals.

We, who believe in democracy, cannot support a violation of the orderly procedures of political democracy, through which a man who has been legally appointed to a position of public trust and has not overtly abused that trust is to be deprived of his office because of his opinions or political affiliations. If it is charged against the Communists that they hold that the end justifies the means, let us not overlook the fact that it is exactly this principle which reactionaries use today when they urge undemocratic measures to serve (as they claim) a democratic end. Such tactic is always the beginning of the substitution of lynch-law for genuine law and becomes the entering wedge for a more inclusive and more brazen Fascist onslaught.

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The Synagogue in an Age of Confusion

By Alexander J. Burnstein*

ONE of the most profound religious symbols ever conceived by the mind of man is the Sacred Wheel of the Indian philosophers. We individuals are all agitated upon the spokes which radiate from the center; the further we proceed from the center, each on his own way, the further we are from one another. But the *nearer* we draw to the *center,* the nearer we come toward one another. If we ever could reach the center, we should be one with the central mystery, one with one another, our agitation would be at an end, we should be at peace and rest. It would be no idle or sluggish rest which would be ours; we should be at the central point of the universe on which all motion depends and from which all the spokes of being go forth into all things. We should understand and see and live in all; and all things would live in us.

Religion is the most primitive, the most backward of all the arts. Hitherto it has been neglected for two main reasons: because human nature tends to neglect anything which can be postponed for the present, and also because a part of the truth always seems greater than more of it would seem.

Nature always slaps back, as one modern playwright has remarked through one of his characters, but she generally takes years to do so. "The mills of God grind slowly." The demands for food and subsistence are of the insistent instant and crowd the foreground. The philosophy of the political conventions seems to be more expedient in removing the incontestable evils of life. So the remote and ulterior spiritual ideals are left in abeyance. The inner problems of a sick world can wait till the immediate evils of life are abolished. So they are never met. Even in the most religious centuries, real religion has always been shoved into the background, and the true prophet cursed by foe and frequently abandoned and deserted by friend.

The other reason why religion is in such a primitive and backward state is

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that one strand in the rope of religion always seems to the possessor to be greater than the entire life line would be. We have tried to be religious while roosting far out on our own individual spokes, far separated from each other and from the center. There is no such thing as a separate and individual religion. He who seems to be most isolated in time and space proves when you come to know him to be one with the whole family of religious souls the world over. Read the Zohar and read the Indian philosophers. Read Jeremiah and read Plato. Though they are removed in time and space, yet in the deepest things you will find them to be one, and you can worry yourself trying to prove that in some way one borrowed from the other. There was no such connection. They saw the same things simply because the things they saw were there.

There are three ways of finding God—in your own soul, in your relations with your fellowmen, and in your study and understanding of nature and its phenomena. There are three types of religious people. There are those who retire into their own hearts and profess to hear the voice of God there, speaking to them of His will for them and for others. This has been the avenue and source of undying inspiration of all great mystics and saints throughout the ages. The strength of this method is in the certainty, the assurance which the man feels that he is indeed in communion with God; its weakness lies in the skepticism with which others regard the validity of this source of knowledge.

There are others who find God exclusively in their relations with their fellowmen. For them the universe is mainly an Institute of Human Relations. Religion is morality. The strength of this position lies in its fruits of human brotherhood and friendliness. Its weakness lies in its tendency to accept the *tangible goods,* such as comfort and health for all, as the *ultimate ends* of human life and destiny, substituting proximate ends for an ethical love which reigns in the very nature of God and is at the very center of the universe. This position frequently omits the fact that there can be no *genuine social* reconstruction without the one dependable assurance that God is on the side of love and righteousness.

The third party finds God in His outside world, in a philosophy of history, in a scientific understanding of the laws which govern creation, in deducing from the regal and majestic ways of the world what kind of power it is which expresses itself in the world.

These are the three schools of thought that predominate in contemporary life. Whether they admit it or not, most serious-minded people fall into one or other of these three classes—the mystics who hear God's voice in the secret chambers of their own hearts, the practical philanthropists and social reformers who find God in social service, the scientists and philosophers, who try to follow the ways of God in the very structure of this vast cosmos or in the pursuit of the eternal laws of truth. Each is sure that his religion is the true religion, distinct from the others. But in the East, whence came views of life characterized by extraordinary elevation and nobility, was born that great religious symbol by which this line of demarcation might be bent round so that its extreme ends might meet and it might become one. And in Isaiah and Jeremiah also we find the inspiration that the very God whom one meets in the silence of one's own spirit and in the service of one's fellows may indeed also be the God that one discovers in the laws and principles of the outside world.

Much of our discouragement about religion is due to this radical division into three schools. The mystic tends to go to seed in sentimentalism, the social worker is apt to repudiate all historic faith and find himself merely a politician or an opportunist, the scientists and philosophers are apt to become so busy with the drops of water that they never see the river; they are apt to become so absorbed in

the various parts that they never see the whole. The sentimental mystic questions the need of a social program of action, the social worker despises the smugness and self-satisfaction enjoyed in conventionally religious services, and the scientists and philosophers speak of God in so abstract and superior a manner as to become incomprehensible to both the other schools.

The only hope of a rebirth of religion lies in the reunion of these three scattered fragments of the spirit. That is what the Synagogue and all institutionalized religion is for: somehow to give mysticism an adequate test of the validity of its vision, to provide social endeavor with a lofty and supreme aim, continually to remind scientists and philosophers that the spadeful of reality they are analyzing is *not* the whole universe in its totality.

The task of the Synagogue seems almost superhuman when one compares it with the simpler problem which faced our forefathers. They had a small world to subsume under the religious idea. How vast is the world to-day compared to theirs, yet there is inestimable inspiration in the thought that even in the days of yore the Synagogue served in its threefold capacity, as a *bet-hatefilah,* a house of prayer, as a *bet-hamidrash,* a house of study and as a *bet-hakneset,* a house of assemblage. The purposes for which the Synagogue is to stand to-day seem immense and staggering as one stands off and looks at the problem. Yet the ideals are not impossible of realization as one forgets oneself in the task.

What is the Synagogue for? The main duty of the Synagogue is to preserve for the Jew the mystical, the growing end of religion. It is to provide a place so hallowed, so beautiful, so awe-inspiring, as to induce the Jew to pray, still to seek that inner union with the divine. This experience of union with the divine is not an object of knowledge in the ordinary sense. Apart from perception it does not exist. Its perception is a part of its very existence. Therefore it cannot be taught directly just as aesthetic emotion cannot be conveyed but is a by-product of experience. It can only be stimulated by suggestion. Here the modern Synagogue has largely failed, not realizing that religion at its heart has very little to do with words, but only with experience and with deeds. The core of religion cannot be expressed. The mystic, the fundamental end of religion, must be suggested by the Synagogue, if it is to survive, with infinite care, thought, and preparation, with art and skill. That suggestion must come by making the Synagogue the loveliest, not necessarily the biggest, institution, the service more carefully, painstakingly and skillfully prepared for than any play on screen or stage, any recital of music or exhibit of painting. The attempt to suggest that God is easily approachable through the archaic and rigid prayers that we recite in the average *shul* and by a haphazard slovenliness in His service must be abandoned. Rabbis and Synagogues have no special privilege. They must be artists operating under the same discipline as all other artists who strive to suggest, through their several media, thoughts and moods too deep for words. The first aim of the Synagogue should be to provide a sanctuary, a Meeting-place, where a people could meet God. And if, owing to the present state of anarchy and debacle of Jewish life, we cannot have many such centers of devotion, let those who dare to remain true to their own audacious idealism, see to it that at least in the larger cities a few such *model* Meeting--places are established.

The second aim of the Synagogue is in our days the most difficult. It is to link that mystical experience inescapably and inevitably with the moral life of the individual and with the transformation of human society so as to make it a fitting expression of the experience of religion. It is easy to drop religion altogether and devote oneself simply to advocating social justice, by scolding and reviling the business methods of to-day. It is desper-

ately hard to stir up and suggest the deepest religious experiences and to keep the golden thread of that inspiration from breaking before it reaches the questions of wages and profits and special privilege. But that thread must be kept intact if the Synagogue is to do anything for social justice. So far a play like "Dead End" or a film like "Modern Times" does this much more effectively than all the pronouncements of Rabbinical and Ecclesiastical bodies have been able to do. These works of art enlist the sympathy of the audience in the personal victims of the system, and suggest most deftly to the audience their responsibility for the shameful conditions. Is it possible for a Synagogue or a church to do the like? I think it is. But it must be done *not* by abandoning the particular task of religion and asserting that there is nothing in it but social service. It must be accomplished by leading the definitely religious experience subtly on into its social expression. Only when men will realize that in the passion for an adequate social organism in the world we have not merely a beautiful human dream, but we have in it a creation of the immanent God at work in the hearts of men, only then will men be willing to sacrifice their own worldly success for something greater than themselves.

The genuine religious experience has always been social at its heart, triumphantly so in the Bible. Its ultimate achievement has not been a zero gazing, but has been a unity which includes all men. And if we are to believe that men are brothers, we must believe that God is our Father. There is no real brotherhood of men without the Fatherhood of God. All the fair and alluring dreams of better days and more ideal men must be based firmly in the constitution of things if we are really to believe in them. There must be some spot in the universe where the ideal lives enthroned if we are actually to have faith in it. The mere fragile projections of our eager thought never can make a place for themselves in the life of the world. But if the fairest thing we dream in an hour of inspired fancy is only a hint of the glorious reality which exists in the life of God, then we can believe in it and work for it, and live in the name of it, and die in loyalty to it, knowing that though temporarily defeated and frustrated, one day it must prevail and conquer. The thing which lives in the life of God must live triumphant in the life of men at last.

The third aim of the Synagogue should be that these three schools, the mystical, the practical and the theoretical, should get together to provide for the modern mind an intellectual habitation, a satisfactory working philosophy which will take into account all the light that has broken forth from God's work in book and earth and mind of man in the years which have passed; what contribution Judaism can *make* to contemporary life as well as what Judaism can *receive* from contemporary life. As one studies the pragmatic processes of thought of some of our "religious humanists" and liberal rabbis, one sometimes wonders if there is in their sublimated sociology any place left for clear assertion about prayer, a Personal God and about the perfect consciousness and purposive intelligence of the Divine Being. I am convinced that there will never be a genuine rebirth of religion unless we have the restoration of theology, great theology available for daily living and thinking. The Jew of old had a vivid sense of the Living God at work in every sphere of human life, giving him a sense of unity and propelling him toward more inwardly noble and more outwardly righteous life. And the great Maimonides, dominated by Aristotle as he was, gave the Jewish people a profoundly worked-out system of theology that held the mind of the intellectual Jew for six or seven centuries. And today it is theology alone, effectively presented in all its implications in and through the Synagogue, that can integrate and organize all the three spheres of man's activity of which we have spoken, and bring all three

together into the Sacred Wheel by which all being is orderly and one. It is the function of the Synagogue in these turbulent and chaotic days to give the Jew a sense of ordered and organic unity between man's own heart, man's society, and man's outer world. Nothing less will satisfy man's quest for certainty, and release the creative energy of our faith in the life of the Jew.

The Zionist Situation in America*

By Samuel M. Blumenfield
(Concluded)

III

A Proposed Solution

There is nothing in this recital of sad Zionist realities which is not known to every intelligent Zionist. I dwelt at length upon the reasons for what I considered to be the breakdown of the Zionist Organization in this country in order to emphasize that Zionist ailments are too deeply rooted to be remedied by palliatives or the sporadic injections of a few spectacular public meetings, the traditional Zionist method of dealing with problems. (At times I think that if a test in association were given, the average response to the term "Zionist" would be "meeting," "speech," or "campaign," rather than Palestine, Jewry, or Hebrew.)

The futility of such spurts of activity was proven only recently in Chicago where an attendance of about 1400 people, addressed by some of the most attractive speakers that the Zionist Organization could command, yielded the sum total of two paid members and nine pledges. There is, indeed, good reason to doubt whether even these "chosen few" will consider themselves in any way obligated to render Zionist service or abide by Zionist discipline. One cannot even be sure that these new members will appear again at another Zionist meeting, having paid the price for their careless curiosity.

I am stating this not in a spirit derogatory to the leaders of the Zionist Organization either here or in any other community. They indeed deserve our full sympathy. Being faced with a blind wall, they are eager to break it, and the busybodying with large public gatherings or meetings gives them, at least, the illusion of Zionist activity. I submit that sporadic, aimless, large public performances sponsored by the Zionist Organization may prove to be pleasant or unpleasant diversions (depending upon the individual taste) to certain people, but they do not in any way further the true interests of Zionism in America.

The Jewish forum in this country commands probably a larger and more regular mass attendance than any other institution or organization; however, we have yet to learn of any positive changes in American Jewish life as a result of these large mass congregations. It could probably be proven that circuses have from days immemorial drawn the largest number of people, but I know of no movement or worthy human endeavor that came as a result of these large gatherings.

There is an unhealthy and feverish competition in Jewish life for mass gatherings and public meetings and it is most essential that the Zionist Organization be not drawn into this orgy of crowd milling. In the case of the Zionist Organization, one cannot emphasize too much the wisdom of the saying that "ten who care are more worthy than one hundred who do not." If the time, energy and

* It has been called to our attention that the title of this article is somewhat misleading in that it describes the situation in the Z.O.A. but does not apply to Hadassah and other Zionist organizations in America.—*Ed.*

money that is spent on Zionist exhibitionist performances had been invested in the moulding of the Zionist personality of the few, the position of the Zionist Organization in this country would have been today much more hopeful.

It is true that Zionism can no longer be the monopoly of a few; at the same time it is well to remember that mass movement does not imply mass organization. Only in dictatorship countries do the two go together. Hitler and Mussolini can order their people to belong to their organizations, and even they are clever enough not to do it. In democracies only small minorities are ready to submit to party discipline. The mass of the people in democratic countries may be in sympathy with a particular party, may even hold similar views, but as a rule they will be satisfied to express such sympathies at the polls but not through active membership. It is therefore entirely natural that similar conditions should prevail in Zionism, which is essentially a democratic movement.

The ultimate goal of an idealist is that there should be no need for ideals. The pacifist hopes that the day may come when there will be no need for the preaching of pacifism. The exponent of the class struggle dreams of a classless society. It is therefore natural for Zionists to look forward to the day when Palestine will be rebuilt, Jewish life reconstructed and there will be no need for a Zionist Organization.

It is this anxiety to "hasten the end" that probably accounts for the recent suggestions on the part of Zionist individuals that there is no need or room for the Zionist Organization in this country. I, for one, cannot share in this optimistic appraisal of Zionist achievement. There can be no doubt that the Zionist movement has made tremendous progress both in the diaspora and in Palestine; however, it would be sheer self-delusion to imagine that Zionists can dispense with the organizational apparatus which made this progress possible. Zionism has hardly begun to achieve its aims; it will therefore need, for many years to come, a powerful organization to protect the interests of Palestine and preserve the purity of Zionist ideals.

With philanthropists taking the lead in Zionist fund raising activities, there is danger that Palestine may be converted into another glorified hospital. One can hear even today the rumblings of the new opposition that is about to arise as a result of a new turn of events in the Jewish homeland. With the pressure of totalitarianism upon us there is real danger that many of our so-called Jewish spokesmen will again reject Jewish nationalism and seek shelter in nebulous churchified conceptions of Judaism. Above all, there is the task of re-educating a generation of youth that knows only of the burdens of Jewry, but is totally uninformed of the positive and creative forces that spring from Jewish nationalism and modern Palestine. These problems cannot be met by mass meetings, but by small groups of men and women with warm hearts and cool heads to whom Zionism is not merely a dues paying formality but a meaningful philosophy of Jewish living.

In emphasizing the need for a dynamic minority one need not disregard the great political benefits to be derived from the support of Jewish majorities. There can be no doubt that the hands of Zionist representatives would be greatly strengthened if they could point to a mass Zionist allegiance on the part of American Jewry. However, the procedure that has been followed hitherto in obtaining mass membership is not only in my judgment undesirable, but has actually proven ineffective. As has already been pointed out, in spite of all the efforts on the part of the Zionist Organization of America, only an insignificant number of those who are in sympathy with Zionism deem it necessary to join the Zionist Organization. It would therefore seem that if only out of practical considerations, the present method of seeking out individual members should be abandoned and a different,

more effective method be devised to enlist the formal support of large numbers. There is no reason why many of the synagogues, men's clubs, sisterhoods, social, cultural and fraternal organzations, which on numerous occasions have expressed their sympathies for Zionism and in many cases contributed to Palestine funds, should not be made to affiliate, through some nominal affiliation fee, with the Z.O.A. or the American counterpart of the World Jewish Agency. Such approach would not only save the Zionist Organization from much fruitless effort, but, if we are to judge by the experience of Chicago, would actually mean a financial saving to the Zionist Organization. (It has been estimated that it cost the Z.O.A. last year $3.75 to obtain a membership of $3.)

To restate the function of the Zionist Organization in terms of a future policy and program of activity, I would suggest that the Zionist Organization should direct its efforts along the following two lines: (1) to cultivate small Zionist fellowships of men and women who are Zionists and who are ready to assume definite responsibilities in behalf of Zionist ideals both in Palestine and the diaspora, (2) to solicit the affiliation, with the Z.O.A. or an American branch of the Jewish Agency, of as many Jewish organizations as possible which are in sympathy with Zionism or the upbuilding of Palestine.

To achieve the first objective it would be necessary to divide the existing Zionist membership into units that are not only conveniently located geographically, but that are also socially and intellectually congenial and would therefore make possible the promotion of Zionist fellowship. Each group in addition to its officers, who would be responsible for the organization activities of that group, should have an educational adviser chosen from the rabbinate, the enlightened laity or the profession of Jewish education to guide their cultural activities. The requirements for membership in such a Zionist Unit should be:

1. Membership dues.
2. Regular attendance at meetings (to be held at least once a month).
3. The introduction of the J.N.F. box into the home (not only for the purpose of contributing regularly to the J.N.F., but as a household Zionist symbol).
4. The acquisition during the year of at least one Zionist volume or some article produced in Palestine.
5. An earnest attempt, in the case of a parent, to provide a Hebrew education for his children.

The regular program of such a unit should consist of:

a. Reading of official Zionist communications and consideration of organization matters.
b. A brief review of Zionist events of the past month.
c. Reports of standing committees, such as membership, U.P.A., J.N.F., and the Community Committee, (the purpose of the latter to be a review of Jewish activities and events in the community and their evaluation in the light of Zionist ideology).
d. Community singing of Hebrew, Yiddish or Anglo-Jewish songs.
e. A general discussion on a specific Zionist subject or book chosen by the educational adviser.
f. A social hour.

Besides such regular meeting each unit should foster from time to time a celebration of Zionist anniversaries and Jewish holidays, engage and cooperate in Zionist campaigns, cooperate in local efforts in behalf of Jewish education, encourage Zionist youth activity by sponsoring a Young Judaea or Avukah enterprise or a function in the nature of a "Fathers and Sons" gathering for the purpose of imbuing the younger people with an appreciation of Zionist ideals and Palestine achievements. These special activities should be planned with a view to interesting certain non-Zionists who, through closer association with active Zionists and better understanding of the aims of Zionism, would become members of the organization.

The second major function, namely, the affiliation of other Jewish organizations with the Zionist Organization, or its equivalent, rests naturally with the National Office. As I see it, a very nominal scale of affiliation dues should be worked out to make it possible for every

Jewish Organization that so desires to become an affiliate of the Z.O.A.

Affiliation with Zionism should imply:

1. Proportional representation in national and local Zionist Governing Councils.
2. Participation in major decisions of Zionist policy.
3. Active participation in fund raising activities.
4. Participation in Zionist elections.
5. The distribution of Zionist literature among the membership.
6. The introduction of a special Zionist ritual in addition to the regular religious or fraternal rituals practiced by that group, or the setting aside of one or more functions during the year for specific Zionist interest or benefit.

In order to bring zest and color to Zionist activity in general it is most essential to ritualize some of the Zionist customs and practices which by now have gained wide currency but as yet do not enjoy the solemnity and stability of religious customs and ceremonies.

The following three Zionist observances would, in my judgment, receive the sanction of the majority of American Jewry:

1. The observance of Hamishah Asar Bishevat for the purpose of stressing the role of Palestine.
2. The Anniversary of Herzl, to emphasize the nationhood of Israel.
3. The birthday of Bialik, to interpret the significance of the Hebrew renaissance.

These occasions can be observed through the selling of Zionist products, the exhibition of Palestine books, arts, movies, etc., for the collection of JNF boxes, the holding of Zionist bazaars, dances or other Zionist public functions.

In making these proposals, I am fully conscious of the inertia that has accumulated in Zionist ranks during these many years and the tremendous difficulties and painstaking efforts that will be required to re-educate Zionists to a fuller and a greater responsibility toward Zionism and Palestine. However, I am also mindful of the rabbinic story which speaks of a short but ultimately long road and the long road which, however, brings one to his destination sooner. The short road of mass gatherings and membership drives has led the Z.O.A. into the blind alley in which it finds itself today. There is therefore nothing to lose and everything to gain from emulating the patience and endurance of our fellow Zionists in Palestine and following the long, painful, but sure road towards our common goal, the upbuilding of Palestine and the revitalization of Israel.

"Many Mansions"

By Ben Zion Bokser

"MANY Mansions," the current Broadway production of the play by Eckert Goodman, is a documented evaluation of present-day religion. It is presented through the unfolding career of a young idealistic preacher who enters the church because he wants to consecrate his life to human service. His gradual but overwhelming disillusionment is the play's final verdict that organized religion is essentially corrupt and cannot be the instrument of significant service to mankind.

That organized religion has somehow proven inept is quite apparent from any consideration of the shocking injustices now prevalent throughout the world. Any cry rebuking religion for its indifference in the face of these injustices ought to be a welcome phenomenon. If criticism is the best spur to self-improvement in personal as well as institutional life, then a play with the thesis of "Many Mansions" ought to be a contribution not alone to religion but to our entire social order which stands in such dire need of the ethical resources latent in religion. There are, however, a number of ideological misunderstandings that mar this play and

deflect its message into insignificant and, at moments, even very dangerous channels.

There are three basic situations where our preacher endeavors vainly to bring his idealism into play, with the consequent loss of faith in the adequacy of the Church. The first is the vindictiveness of the dean of his theological school who expels a student on the day of graduation for rowdyism on the campus instead of practicing the sympathy and forgiveness that the occasion demands. The second is an experiment in general social work among young people. It is effective as far as the young people are concerned, who flock to the church for their social and recreational life and who eagerly come to seek the young minister's advice in the solution of their personal problems. But the senior pastor regards this as a secularization of the church and objects to it strenuously. When he proceeds to cancel a dance in the church vestry, for which all arrangements have already been made, our hero resigns in bitter disgust.

The third is his effort to protect an innocent woman from arrest on false charges of prostitution. The raid has been sponsored by a publicity-seeking district attorney, who needs to build up his record for the forthcoming elections. The woman is saved, but pressure from the district attorney's office finally moves the bishop to expel the recalcitrant parson from the church altogether.

These three situations are obviously to be interpreted as symbols. They indicate the general areas where the author of the play expects religion to serve the community and where he finds the Church failing. But is it in these areas of activity, above all at this time, that the message of the Church is needed and that the idealistic minister finds himself frustrated? Suppose every preacher were given a free hand to carry out our hero's program. Would that make religion a vital force for the ethical redemption of the world? What the world suffers from today is ultimately related to the immoralities of an economic order which produces starvation in the midst of plenty, and which, to resolve its own contradictions, must periodically resort to war.

Would a religion following the pattern of "Many Mansions" make any contribution to purging the social order of these abuses?

Progressive preachers have since learned that the call of the hour is for a religion that will translate its ethical implications into a leadership that will be relevant to the great social issues of our day—issues that have to do with race relations, with economic justice, and with world peace. Of this the hero of "Many Mansions" seems to have no inkling. A religion that tries to do no more than encourage the weak and succor the needy may, in individual instances, meet with obstruction from bigoted men, but generally this is the kind of religion that the ruling classes of our day welcome, for it leaves them undisturbed in their power and vested interests. Indeed, "Many Mansions" at one point plays directly into the hands of reactionaries. In a futile interview with the bishop, which precedes his final expulsion from the Church, our hero speaks sneeringly of teachers of religion who will speak on the "New Deal" and neglect the work of saving human souls. That is exactly what some of our staunchest reactionaries would say too: "Let the Church stick to the work of saving human souls and not delve into problems of a social and economic nature."

The kind of difficulties which "Many Mansions" points to as besetting the hero in his efforts to carry out his ideals, are not significant in revealing the crisis which indeed does exist in religion. "Many Mansions" preaches the doctrine of evangelical pietism, which wants to save the world through the practice of individual good-will. Progressive religion has long since gone beyond that. It has recognized that individual good-will is not enough, but that what is needed is the reaching-out after the moral dyna-

mics that will help build a more ethical society.

The ministry of the men who have consecrated their lives to this conception of religion is indeed difficult and at times even tragic, but "Many Mansions" does not tell that story; it does not deal with their problem. The great social play that will present a significant evaluation of religion still remains to be written.

Tomorrow's Bread

By Samuel Dinin

THROUGH the generosity of the children of Edwin Wolf, a former president of the Jewish Publication Society of America, the J.P.S. has been able to establish an Edwin Wolf Award for the best novel of Jewish interest. *Tomorrow's Bread** is the first recipient of this award. The establishment of a prize for the best novel of Jewish interest is encouraging indeed and augurs well for the future of Jewish creativity in this country. Anglo-Jewish fiction has been distinguished by its poverty and lack of distinction. The neglect and lack of recognition suffered by Jewish writers have discouraged the production of first-rate Jewish novels. Without a stimulating environment and a receptive audience, and without some compensation, no writer can be expected to devote his talents to the furtherance of Jewish life in this country. It is to be hoped that the Edwin Wolf Award will be only the first of literary awards which will make it possible to stimulate Jewish writers to express themselves in terms of the American Jewish scene.

But although we are happy indeed that an award was made for the best novel of Jewish interest, we cannot, much as we should like to, be enthusiastic about *Tomorrow's Bread.* It is not an outstanding novel which deserves to be prized. *Tomorrow's Bread* is neither pumpernickel, French pastry nor pie in the sky. It is a proletarian novel without a message of "social significance." It is a story of a labor leader who devotes his life to the labor movement and dies in the end, of a broken heart, but *Tomorrow's Bread* does not make it sufficiently clear whether it was a Ladies, the Ladies' Garments, or the Ladies' Garments Union which broke his heart. Park Avenue may have swallowed *Pins and Needles* and joined the rest of the world in shouting and dancing to "Bei Mir Bist Du Shoen," but neither Park Avenue nor Union Square, nor the ghettoes of Chicago and New York will find *Tomorrow's Bread* "grand."

As a story of an individual labor leader, *Tomorrow's Bread* is a readable and at times exciting and moving tale. But if Sam Karenski is supposed to be symbolic of the Jewish Labor Movement, then what he symbolizes escapes me completely.

The portrait of Sam Karenski has too many extraneous layers which obscure his essential character. The metamorphosis of Sam from a greenhorn who wants to be like the *Goyim* and have a girl on his knees, who frequents the Sans Soucie Burlesque, who is a successful cloak contractor, into a labor leader who is a flaming orator, an incorruptible idealist, a social reformer, an anarchist, a free-lover, is too sudden, and artistically unconvincing. And though Sam Karenski grows in stature as a labor leader his weakness for women is always with him. As Sam's wife remarks to him angrily, he stands for a closed shop in labor and for an open shop in his relations to women. Now there was undoubtedly some

*By Beatrice Bisno, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, Pa., 1938.

connection between anarchism, social reform, free-love and the labor movement, but Miss Bisno does not make explicit the connections between these elements, and, as far as the story of Sam Karenski is concerned, they only impede the action and throw the play of forces off-side.

It may well be that Sam Karenski is a realistic portrait of some actual labor leader who was intimately known to Miss Bisno. Miss Bisno is the daughter of a well-known labor leader and has been connected with the labor movement in one way or another almost all her life. And on that account I may look foolish for saying what I do. I do not know Miss Bisno, and I do not know whether *Tomorrow's Bread* is based on personal observation and knowledge, but I have a suspicion that the weakness of the book is due to too much reliance on personal history and not enough on artistic reinterpretation and integration of her materials. There may have been a Sam Karenski who did and was all the things Miss Bisno has him do and be. That may make him photographically real but not necessarily artistically true and convincing.

If *Tomorrow's Bread* is not satisfying as a novel about the labor movement today or tomorrow, it is colorful in its description of the rise and struggles of the Jewish labor movement yesterday, particularly in Chicago. We are given a realistic account of the hardships suffered by the Jewish immigrants in the sweatshops of Chicago and New York, of their early struggles to rise from the mire and muck of poverty, filth and conditions of peonage, of the birth and growth of the needle industry, and of the organization and emergence to power of the unions connected with it. And we are given glimpses into Sam Karenski's life, of a labor leader who sacrifices himself for labor, who in his vision for labor and mankind "is so far ahead of his time that he is doomed never to complete himself."

It is a pity that the many forthright characterizations to be found in the book both of individuals and of the labor movement as a whole, are not rounded into portraits that are steady and whole. I have already referred to the flaws in the characterization of Sam Karenski. If *Tomorrow's Bread* is supposed to be not only the study of a labor leader, but of a movement, then I frankly do not know what conclusions can be drawn from the book unless it be that the needle-workers worked under sweatshop conditions, that they had to work like mad before they could organize successfully and before their demands were met even in part, that their leaders again and again deserted them, including Sam Karenski, to go into business, lured by bourgeois standards of comfort and love of property, that the children of the labor leaders who fought the battle of labor for decades spurned the ideals of their parents and went the way of the bourgeoisie. But even some of these conclusions are vaguely suggested by characters and events which appear on the periphery of the plot. The why and the wherefore, the meaning of it all, where it is all leading to—all these problems are left hanging in the air.

It is a pity too that Miss Bisno has not fully mastered the medium of speech used in the book. It is a difficult thing to write about Jews who speak now in Yiddish, and now in Yiddish English. To translate the Yiddish speech, to catch the shades and nuances of the English spoken by immigrant Jews is a hard task. In *Call It Sleep* Roth succeeded remarkably well. The language in *Tomorrow's Bread* is often neither English nor Yiddish nor the Yiddish English which the Jews have characteristically created.

Tomorrow's Bread may be lean fare for a first prize novel, but we hope that future prize novels will offer a more sumptuous feast.

THE

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EDITORIALS

TESTING THE COMPETENCE OF JEWISH LEADERSHIP
HOW NOT TO DEFEND DEMOCRACY

JEWRY AND DEMOCRACY
By Louis Minsky

AARON DAVID GORDON
By Joshua Trachtenberg

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